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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 001579

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV ECON EFIN PINS TU

SUBJECT: TURKEY'S NEW GOVERNMENT: MORE ON ERDOGAN'S TIMING

REF: ANKARA 1546

(U) Classified by Polcouns John Kunstadter; reasons: 1.5
(b,d).

¶1. (C) Summary: AK leader Erdogan likely to submit his candidate cabinet list March 13. Possible he will emerge as Prime Minister in office as of that date. Still no convincing sign, however, that he intends to pass a parliamentary resolution approving U.S. troop deployment in the next five-six days. End summary.

¶2. (C) Three contacts from ruling AK Party and a journalist with close ties to AK's leadership tell us party chairman Tayyip Erdogan is likely to submit his candidate cabinet list to President Sezer Thursday, March 13. Another AK contact sees the list not being submitted until March 17. Erdogan becomes P.M. in office as soon as Sezer approves a list and sends it to parliament, so it is possible Erdogan will assume the post by March 13.

¶3. (C) AK Party parliamentary group deputy chairman Fatsa, party deputy chairman for foreign policy Disli, outspoken human rights and anti-corruption advocate and AK M.P. Yarbay, and journalist Cengiz Candar told us separately March 12 they think Erdogan will submit his list March 13. Fatsa, Yarbay, and Candar opined that the shuffle of current cabinet members may be limited to half a dozen; Candar foresees Erdogan's cabinet as substantially more action-oriented than the cabinet of outgoing P.M. Abdullah Gul.

¶4. (C) In addition, while acknowledging that much is indexed to the results of UNSC deliberations March 13, Candar said he expects Erdogan to submit a new draft resolution approving deployment of U.S. troops early the week of March 17. For their part, Yarbay and Fatsa reiterated the need for the U.S. to give Erdogan an incentive to submit the draft resolution; both mentioned, among other things, "guarantees" on Turkey's post-Saddam role, on the status of the Turkmen, and on the U.S. commitment against an independent Kurdish state.

¶5. (C) AK M.P. Turan Comez, who had served as Erdogan's private secretary until last autumn's general election campaign, told us March 12 he expects the cabinet list to emerge March 17. Comez expects a substantial shuffle, involving a dozen posts; he affirmed that his name is under consideration for the Health Ministry. With better contacts among the mass of AK M.P.s than most others, Comez has been an accurate predictor of trends in AK, but in this case his is the outrider view.

¶6. (C) Comment: Deputy chairman Disli and Erdogan's secretary confirmed to us March 12 that Erdogan was continuing to work on his cabinet list late into the evening, which we interpret as evidence he is aiming to present his list March 13. We continue to tell interlocutors that time is running out for the GOT to pass a deployment resolution.
PEARSON